

The Old Way of Making Maple Sugar.

Seventy years ago the process of making maple sugar was very different from what it is at present. There were then the same problems to be solved as now. The sap must first be drawn from the trees and then the water of solution separated from the sap, leaving apart the pure sugar; but as to the means, appliances and details of labor for accomplishing this task, those in use to-day are far different from the necessities of the olden times.

So, too, of the product. The maple sugar of to-day is, in color, texture and taste quite a different article from that commonly produced seventy years ago. I say commonly, for even by the old methods it was quite possible to produce various grades in all these several respects, color and taste being largely dependent upon the cleanly habits and assiduous care of the workers, or the reverse. Thus you would see brought in to the country store cakes of new maple sugar of all shapes and sizes, and of varying shades and hues, from a dirty dark brown to a tawny yellow, either of these bearing quite commonly a reddish tinge.

As to taste, many persons, disregarding the manifest evidences of dirt as causing the color, profess to prefer greatly the "good old-fashioned sugar" of dark color; while others, esteeming "cleanness next to godliness," call for the pure sugar of light hue and delicate flavor, it being free from admixture with twigs, leaves and all manner of dirt. Occasionally only you would see beautiful cakes of nearly white sugar, only tinged with yellow, and bearing the truly delicious and characteristic maple flavor. The reputation of the makers of such sugar has spread abroad.

But let us prepare for the sugar camp of seventy years ago. First, the spiles. These were prepared beforehand during stormy days, when the men and boys were shut in from outdoor work. They were split from the edge of a billet of pine which, six inches or so in length, had been sawed or chopped from the log and split into billets or planks about one and one-fourth inches in thickness. With a gouge these could be split very readily from the edge of the straight-grained pine, and then sharpened to the exact shape of the gouge. On a fair morning in spring, with a gentle westerly breeze, the head-farmer, with his hired man and his boys, and his yoke of young oxen drawing the sled laden with spiles, pails and other receptacles, takes his way to the sugar camp. This has been previously chosen with some care—a spot naturally sheltered from the north-east wind and located with due regard to convenience of access, and usually protected by a rude shed of boards and slabs. Here they store the bulk of their things, and two of the company proceed to tap the trees, while the others, with the yoke of young cattle and sled, go in quest of fire-wood, in case that necessary article has not already been provided. The farmer, axe in hand, approaching a selected tree, chooses a spot on the trunk directly over which grows a considerable row of lustrous branches, and with three or four vigorous strokes he chops into it a slanting gash four or five inches in length and to the depth of about one inch in the tree, making the lower side of the cut inclined inward and downward, so as to retain the flowing sap and discharge the same at its lower end. Just beneath this the gouge is driven (concave up) into the bark, and directly on being removed the gouge-shaped spile is driven in its place, which receives and conveys the sap to the receptacle below. This receptacle was usually propped up on blocks of wood, broken limbs, or it may be on the frozen snow. For these the house utensils were largely drawn upon—such as pails, buckets, pots, kettles, tubs, anything that would hold sap. Besides these, short logs of wood were resorted to, each round block or log being first split into halves, and then a cavity would be chopped or dug out from the flat or split side, and so form a sap-trough. Hundreds of these sap-troughs were in those days provided and piled away for use in the sugar season. So, if the day continued fair and with a westerly wind, the previous night having been a frosty one, the tapping would go on; but in case of freezing cold or storm or south wind, and the sap would not flow, they would retire from the woods to await a more favorable day.

But in the meantime preparations for boiling have been going on at the camp. First of all there was the big kettle called "the old potash kettle;" it was of cast-iron, and made with a heavy flange or lug projecting from each of the opposite edges. With a chain extending like a bail from flange to flange, this was suspended on a stout pole, which was long enough and stout enough to carry the whole supply of kettles. This pole was rested at each end in a crotched or forked stake driven into the ground, and suitably braced. Then, in decreasing size it may be, came two other iron kettles with balls, which could either hang on the pole or be suspended therefrom by short pieces of chain, or with iron hooks, according to convenience. Good-sized logs had been placed on either side and next to the row of kettles, which were about eight inches above the ground. Then wood (dry wood, if possible), some split fine and some coarser, was laid beneath and between the kettles and logs, when kindled, would make a roaring fire, and set the sap therein sizzling. Thus was the water driven

off in the form of steam; and a merry task it was to draw wood, split wood, pile on wood, and mend the fires, to bail the sap from kettle to smaller kettle, to replenish "the old potash" with fresh supplies, and to watch the increasing color as the contents of the smallest kettle grew darker and darker with accumulating sweetness. Nor must you forget to ply the frequent skimmer upon all the kettles, in order to remove every appearance of filth and foreign ingredients, which otherwise would remain and be incorporated with the sugar. Now and then you can find a moment to snatch up the sap-yoke to your shoulders, and with the two pails swinging therefrom, bring in a small load of sap from the nearby trees; while others in like manner go to more distant trees and bring in many loads; or it may be that with a barrel or two fastened on the sled, the steers are again in requisition to bring in barrel loads of sap from the most distant trees of the bush.

But the liquid in the smallest kettle has taken on a darker hue; it boils with a different look and with a different sound. It is almost thick enough for syrup. Let us try it with a dipper or with the skimmer. Dip the skimmer into the hot syrup; then holding it up, let the syrup drain from the edge. If two drops appear at once and slowly approach each other, and are finally detached from the skimmer's edge, connected only by a thin film of syrup, "it aprons;" that is, it is nearly ready or the strainer. Soon, when it aprons more readily and more widely, it must be taken off and strained, either through thick muslin or through flannel, or both, and it is then ready to be sugared off, except that you may allow it to stand for a few hours for impurities to settle.

For sugaring off, the syrup is placed in a kettle specially devoted to the purpose, and hung over a slow fire. This sugaring off is often the occasion of much sport and merry-making. Often your friends and neighbors "happen in" just to have a taste of your nice new warm sugar. Sometimes cousins, nieces and nephews and other relatives are invited to a warm sugar party, and then it is usual for them to have gay, jovial and sweet times. The syrup, clean and pure, having been racked off from its sediment before being placed in the kettle, must now be watched to see that it neither boils over nor becomes scorched from too hot a fire. But it boils beautifully and steadily on with a peculiar plump, plump, plumping sound, which pleasantly betokens the coming feast, as do also its color, so soft and rich, and its unsurpassed fragrance. These three characteristics serve as guides or tests, whereby the skilled expert may know when the syrup has reached that stage when, on removal from the fire, it will cool into solid sugar. There are other tests, however. When a drop on a tinued surface will hold itself up, so as to retain its globular or oval form, it is supposed to be done. "String out" (scatter) a spoonful upon snow, or even cold water; if it hardens quickly, so as to break on attempt to bend between the fingers, it may be concluded with certainty that it is already in the sugary state.

Now is the time for lovers of warm sugar to "dip in." They may each begin with a saucer of hot syrup to stir off with a spoon and taste as they may desire, until it is changed to sugar in their hands. A favorite treat is maple wax or maple candy, which is formed by scattering spoonful after spoonful upon pans of clean snow, where it immediately hardens, and may at once be taken from the snow with the spoon or with a small stick made for the purpose, even with the fingers, and eaten. This is regarded as the most exquisitely delicious of all the forms of warm maple sugar. Warm powdered sugar is much prized by many. It may be formed by constantly stirring with a spoon the saucer of syrup until, as it hardens into sugar, it is completely pulverized. All the guests having been fully supplied, the remaining syrup is poured into moulds to harden into cakes for future use, or for the market. Considerable stirring seems to give the sugar a lighter color, but at the same time breaks the little crystals and makes the sugar "fine grained."

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No Further Recency.
Maud—Well, I see Mabel Garthorn after all these years has given up trying to get Philip fitted. Irene—(What's the reason? Maud—Haven't you heard? She's got him—Chicago Tribune.

Two Mended Fashions.
Beautiful is the activity which works for good, and beautiful the stillness which waits for good; blessed the self-sacrifice of the one, blessed the self-forgetfulness of the other.—Robert Cook, Jr.

Lackawanna Summer Resorts.
"Mountain and Lake Resorts" is the title of an attractive publication just issued by the Passenger Department of the Lackawanna Railroad. The book is intended to give readable and reliable information about vacation places along that road, and its 128 pages are filled with suggestions for those seeking summer homes. The various hotels and boarding places, their location, rates and facilities are accurately described. More than 100 half-tones add to the interest of the book, and a brightly written love story, entitled "A Paper Proposal," complements its contents.

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THE CREEK INDIANS.

How They Lived in the Early Days in Indian Territory.

In early days in Indian Territory the Creeks had a simple but abundant food always on hand. Among the edibles were sweet potatoes, almost white in flesh, with a brilliant crimson skin. These were stored in dry sand in little cellars dug under the floor of the kitchen cabins, where they were kept perfectly until the next summer. Yellow corn, weighing often six, eight and ten pounds, were also raised. Corn was their standby, and the soil and climate seemed especially favorable to it in all the different varieties they cultivated for their household use. There was the early corn for the roasting ears, the kind that was cooked with the sacred now fire at the annual feast when the first fruits of the year had been offered to the spirits; the soft white flour corn that, beaten in the great wooden mortars, made delicious bread; the hard, starchy corn which, boiled in the mortars, was the basis for sofkey, the great national dish, and, besides, there was rank growing field corn for stock food. Where the cornfields were, pumpkins were also raised, and the late summer and autumn found scaffolds near the cabins with poles strung with sections of pumpkins drying in the sunshine. Corn was boiled on the cob and plated in long festoons to dry for winter use, and many varieties of beans and field peas were also dried and stored. Wonderful melons were raised in large quantities of such size and quality that they were surpassed by those of no other country.—Kansas City Journal.

MAX MULLER'S CHANGE.

The Famous Philologist Sorely Needed It When It Came.

When Max Muller, the famous philologist, first arrived in England in 1847, at the invitation of the East India company, he was often obliged to exercise the greatest care in order to eke out his somewhat limited income. Concerning this period of his life an interesting story is told in "The Life and Letters of Muller," edited by his wife.

One day Muller left his spectacles, which he had broken, to be mended at a shop in the Strand, and on calling to fetch them he laid down a sovereign to pay for them. The shopman returned him change for half a sovereign and persisted that Muller had only given him 10 shillings. It was in vain to remonstrate. The man only became abusive to the unmistakable foreigner in a well worn coat, and Muller left the shop, sadly aware that the missing 10 shillings represented several dinners which he must give up.

Some days passed dinnerless when one evening the man rushed out of the shop as Muller was passing with 10 shillings in his hand, which he held out to him.

"Oh, sir," he said, "I have watched for you several days. You were right. I found I had 10 shillings too much when I counted up my money that evening, and I have longed to give it back to you," adding, "for you look as if you wanted it."

The Implacable Critic.

"What made Gumbleton so buffy at the complimentary banquet tendered him by the members of his profession?"

"Did you hear of it? He was displeased at a remark made by one of the speakers."

"What was the remark?"

"Why, the speaker said that Gumbleton was one of the few men in his profession who never made a mistake."

"Why, I should have thought Gumbleton would have liked that."

"He'd have liked it well enough if his wife hadn't been sitting in the gallery."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Candlefish of Puget Sound.

Very queer fish are caught in the waters of Puget sound. One kind is called the candlefish. It is dried and packed in boxes like candles. We are told the fishermen use them to light their homes and that at one time all the boats on the sound used them instead of sperm oil lamps. By putting the heads of the fish downward in a candlestick and lighting the tail, which, in conjunction with the backbone, acts as a wick, it burns like a candle. They eat this fish, and when cooking, it is so fat it fries itself.

Proof of His Sanity.

"Well, I am the only sane man here who has the papers to prove it," one Oklafoosian observed.

The rest looked at him in astonishment.

"Oh, it's true," he protested. "I've got my discharge from the Mount Pleasant Insane asylum right here in my pocket."

Looking Ahead.

"Now," whispered the eloping girl as she jumped into his arms, "how shall we dispose of the ladder?"

"We must hide it somewhere in the garden," replied her gallant lover. "If your father doesn't forgive us we may have to use it to get back again."—Philadelphia Ledger.

A Pointed Reply.

"You haven't got much of a head," said the needle to the pin.

"No," replied the latter, "but at the same time we pins have our fine points."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

A Brute.

Younghusband—I dreamed last night that your mother was dying. His Wife—Brute! I heard you laugh in your sleep.—New York Times.

A woman does a lot of thinking trying to figure out whether the baby is going to be a great man or a good man.—New York Press.

NEW THOUGHTS.

Are you growing more attractive as you advance in life?

"Given a healthy body," says Dr. R. V. Pierce, the specialist in women's diseases, "and a healthy mind, and everyone can cultivate and enjoy happiness." We must eat properly and digest well, and everyone can cultivate and enjoy happiness. It is a fact that any form of dyspepsia may in a few days transform a clear, white skin into a mass of pimples and black spots. A beautiful woman has the beauty of her stomach.

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